

of quality and the need for thoroughness. The academic can apply himself to practical affairs⁶ and if universities are for the intellectual elite, they must be guided by the elite, for these individuals, even if they do not always know best, will know better than other contenders.

The development of the Johns Hopkins Medical School illustrates the point. Johns Hopkins, a shrewd and highly successful merchant banker, personally selected trustees according to their demonstrated ability, commissioning them 'to obtain advice and assistance of those at home and abroad who had achieved the greatest success'. Gilman, the first President, implemented this idea master-minding the endeavour²⁵, and selecting key personnel on the basis of scientific achievement. The spirit of enquiry which dominated the school, the select hierarchy, the considerable freedom of action, and an unobtrusive administration established the Johns Hopkins in less than 10 years as one of the world's leading medical schools. The key to success was the emphasis on quality and discrimination between 'men of mark' and second-raters²⁶. Universities, when they cease the pursuit of excellence and do not insist on merit as an inflexible guideline for selection and reward, fail in their responsibility to society. Australia and New Zealand both desperately need a medical school which will bear comparison with the best of overseas schools. Improvement will follow pursuit of the ideal. Continuing to follow the present course of events which is the very antithesis of the model here outlined, will not lead to success.

Conclusion

Government of universities and medical schools should depend on a rational policy, with the university philosophy foremost and decision-making determined by the rational debate of carefully selected committee members rather than by political expediency. The right to committee membership must be earned by academic and intellectual achievement of the highest order for the personal and intellectual characteristics required in their attainment are those which best equip a candidate to foster the environment conducive to the maximum development of the intellect and originality of staff and students. Intellectual and academic achievement remain the only yardstick of individual suitability for academic staff positions, and also for membership of university policy-making committees, if quality is the aim. The method is tried and proven. Current trends away from these requirements are affecting universities and medical schools adversely.

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THE UNIVERSITY AND THE STATE: PREPARING ITS LEADERS AND PLAYING ITS TUNE?¹

An academic approaching the end of his useful life has a regrettable tendency to become in Horace's words a *laudator temporis acti se puero*, one who sees only good in what went on when he was a boy, at least in matters educational. The temptation to believe that a system which produced oneself must be the best of all possible systems is hard to resist. Nevertheless in moments of clear rational thought — and those moments are probably as rare amongst professional academics as they are elsewhere in the community — the insistence of one question hammers away at our brains: "Was the past so good after all?"

Universities in my own lifetime have changed quite remarkably and the change has to do with the very essence of the university. In the nineteen thirties they still had some relationship to the medieval concept of such institutions. They were in essence communities of scholars concerned primarily with the pursuit of knowledge. In saying this, I make no judgment about how available universities were to the people. I am simply saying that those who were lucky enough to be admitted to such communities of scholars would in large part subscribe to the view that scholarly and scientific investigation was their main purpose. And it was to such a community that I was admitted as an undergraduate. Nevertheless, one only had to look around to see that such lofty ideals were not universally held within the community of undergraduates and graduates with whom one lived. It soon became apparent that many who were admitted to the community of scholars regarded such admission as the right of a gentleman. And a gentleman could be quite simply defined. He was a man with ample funds at his disposal. (And I say a man advisedly, for when I was an undergraduate, women were not allowed to enjoy full membership of the university community.)

It has to be admitted that by the end of the nineteen thirties attendance at universities was to a very large extent confined to two groups, those who could afford it and those whose academic ability had enabled them to survive the rigours of a series of examinations designed to eliminate all but the most persistent of the intellectually gifted. These two groups were not mutually exclusive. The poor have not the sole claim to intellectual distinction, nor were those whose parents were paying fees always wealthy. For middle-class parents often went to great sacrifice to permit their children to benefit from a university education. There were two reasons for such financial sacrifice. One was that a large number of parents

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could see the genuine, intrinsic value of such an education and, in many instances, regretted having been denied it themselves. But it cannot be denied that there was a second motive at work. The possession of a university degree was to many the basic ingredient in the recipe for a successful consummation of social aspiration. I believe I am supposed to call this "the realisation of upward social mobility" these days.

The war changed all this. In 1945 men and women, who had had a lifetime's experience in five years, were knocking at the doors of our universities. For the first time a university education was a possibility for those who would have dismissed the very idea as an unattainable pipe-dream in the nineteen-thirties. Financial constraints had patently become less of a burden, for government grants had suddenly become, if not freely available, at least available on a fairly generous scale to a large part of the community. And these men and women were mostly between 23 and 30 years of age with a wealth of experience of life behind them. It was they who caused the great change in the university community, for they brought to our universities a practical experience of life and an insistence that every opportunity for learning should be grasped and savoured to the full. More important, it was this generation who perceived first that the university was a national institution, open to all and no longer the preserve of the clever and the wealthy. The people were now concerned in the conduct of universities, they wanted to know what went on in such places and they were determined to find out. But the people in a democracy elect representatives to act on their behalf and so the parliament, both Government and Opposition, became involved in the continuing provision of funds for academic institutions.

We have now entered that phase of university politics with which we are all familiar, the essential feature of which is the need to maintain the independent nature of our universities while gratefully accepting funds from our paymasters who, it might reasonably be thought, have a right to know what is being done with their money and also perhaps a right to say what ought to be done with it. I imagine it is unnecessary to point out that their money is our money. But this truism perhaps does require a moment's thought. For what we are really saying is that each one of us, through our parliamentary representatives, has a right to know exactly what is going on in teaching and research universities.

1. This is an edited version of an address given to St Albert's College, University of New England, on 6 June 1980.

I think we probably have this right and none of us who are members of universities would wish it to be withheld. But it is when we as citizens wish to say how we think any particular university ought to spend its money that the difficulties arise. For teaching and research demand independence as an essential prerequisite, and it is the preservation of this independence from government interference (interference on our own behalf, as taxpayers, let it be remembered) that is the main preoccupation of those who think about universities today.

This rapid and superficial survey of the recent past has brought us to the present, which is a springboard for a future that never comes. For each moment of the future is consumed by the present and the past in relentless succession. I make this obvious, if not fatuous, statement because in the past planning for the future has been done with little attention to the realities of the present. In the last twenty years I have taken part in three blueprints for the future of the University of New England to the year 2000. As far as I know, none of them has ever been looked at again once the inevitable committee submitted its final report. Planning for the future is planning for the present. Nevertheless, planning nearly always becomes improvisation in practice. Human beings have many gifts (particularly in universities). Accurately foreseeing the future is not one of them. So improvisation is always needed, but it must be improvisation on a basis of reasonable forethought.

The question that requires an answer from academics is simple enough. It is "What should we do now?". This question asks itself. The problems confronting universities are many. First, the implications of the use of public money. To what extent should universities be prepared to accept direction from outside? How far should members of the academic community be accountable for what they do and to whom should they render an account of themselves? To their own institutions? Or to the government and through it to the people? How far should the search for truth be tailored to the needs of the community? What should the community feel it can, as of right, demand of academics? This selection of questions arises because of the universities' willing acceptance of government funding.

But there is a second group of questions that arise independently of the source of financial provisions. These questions concern the aims of university education. Should universities return to a more elitist concept of their role in society? Is it the business of academic institutions to train young people to be the leaders of the future? And arising from that, what sort of leaders does society require? Or should universities provide the leadership that academics believe that society requires?

It seems to me that this selection of problems can be reduced fairly easily to two general areas, accountability and the desirability of leadership. What follows

will of necessity be a statement of a personal *credo*. What I see as a desirable blueprint for the future of the academy will be, of necessity, influenced by my own concept of how best the academy can fulfil its role in the complex web of modern society.

Defining Accountability

First, then, let us confront the problem of accountability. He who pays the piper calls the tune. This old saw is more apt than may be realised by those who use it as a justification for outside influence on universities. For the tune is ultimately in the hands and on the lips of the piper. Once the piper has been paid, he can, if he is courageous enough, play what he likes. Indeed his patron may well not understand, or even know, the tune that is emerging. He who pays the piper may well call for a particular tune: but the piper has complete freedom of performance. Short of the use of sanctions to which we hope our governments will never resort, nothing can make the piper play a tune that is unacceptable to him.

In a democracy our freedom is considerable: and we must learn to use it. Governments are merely one sort of effective pressure group. (Ask the Olympic athletes!) There are others and they are probably more dangerous. However much we may dislike any particular government, it is as well that we remember that a majority of us elected it and that a majority of us can get rid of it. I know it is not quite as simple as that, but the truth that underlines that over simplification is absolute, so long as this country remains a democracy.

We all know, however, that the public purse is not bottomless. This has led many universities and individuals in universities to seek funds elsewhere. Some of the sources are the various research institutions whose standards of integrity are as high as those which should be, but are not always, found in universities. The academic's greatest temptation comes not from such outside bodies, as we call them, but from elsewhere. Great commercial undertakings also sponsor academic research and provide scholarships for graduate and undergraduate study. They do this for a variety of reasons. Many commercial enterprises actively encourage research for no other reason than that it is their view that such research should be encouraged. Others involve themselves in the support of academic research because to give financial support to disinterested inquiry leads to the acquisition of prestige. A third group commission research in universities because the results of the research are of crucial importance to the future of their undertakings. None of these motives is in fact bad. But I think that the increasing reliance of academic institutions on commercial enterprises for the funding of research can only lead to disaster.

In the allocation of funds, governments have to keep their word once they have made a commitment. They are responsible to us, the people. But we have found

recently in the matter of the sponsorship of the activities of the Australian Olympic Federation that large companies can change their minds and have no public accountability whatever. I know nothing of the working of big companies or large corporations, still less of the multi-national and supernational agglomerations. But one fact about them should give all academics pause. They are responsible to no one but their own shareholders and those shareholders in fact exercise far less power than the voters in a democracy.

Many of these large corporations (and Shell in particular) used to offer valuable scholarships to young people that involved no subsequent commitment to the company on the part of the recipient. But I understand that these generous scholarships are now less commonly available. Even if they were still generally available, the point that I wish to make is still valid. The acceptance of money, whether for teaching or research, from commercial enterprises, whether private or public companies, involves universities in a new set of obligations, which they may well not wish to meet. Large corporations, however altruistic, are not responsible to the citizens as a whole: governments are. So I suggest that the first step universities have to take in the immediate future is to grit their teeth and put a stop to their involvement with these large companies. It will hurt, but we shall be in no danger of losing our freedom. For commerce is concerned largely with the promotion of consumer goods in one way or another: the concern of academic institutions is with objective assessment. The two do not readily mix.

But if we must avoid involvement with the world of business, surely, it will be argued, we must remain involved with those who provide our funds, the elected parliamentarians of the day who make up the Government? If involvement means telling the Parliament, through the appropriate Minister, what the universities are doing, well and good. But the submission of an annual report to the Government of the day (and in Australia that means two Governments, except for the Australian National University) should be the limit of this reporting. If this is what is meant by accountability then it is not only desirable, it is an absolute necessity in a democracy. Incidentally I think there is a curious anomaly in our federal system. Universities receive their money from the Federal Government (although it is nominally paid through State Government agencies.) However, the annual report is submitted to the State Government: and, as so often in a democracy, this characteristic piece of inefficiency goes far to guaranteeing our freedom. It is authoritarian, unelected governments that are efficient.

Accountability to Government means telling the people what we are doing in universities. In fulfilling this obligation universities are meeting a democratic requirement and it is one which they should meet with pleasure and, we hope, pride. But accountability

does not involve justification. The search for truth, the pursuit of knowledge require no justification and, although I would never ask for academics a freedom that is not available to all, I think that that much used catch-cri "academic freedom" really means that universities do not have to justify that part of their activity which is concerned with teaching and research. "Academic freedom" is simply the application of the concept of freedom to the particular circumstances of the academic life. Nothing more: there is no special freedom for academics, but it is well to remember that it is the freedom of universities and trade unions that is always the first to be challenged and threatened by authoritarian governments.

Accountability, the rendering of an account of our stewardship then is an admirable concept, provided it is viewed as a democratic requirement. It is a sort of financial equivalent of an "open day", when universities reveal to what use they have put the funds that have been made available to them from the public purse. Further than this universities should not be required to go, and if they are so required, they must refuse whatever the cost.

This resistance to outside influence becomes much more imperative in times of economic recession when there is competition for limited public funds. Universities must understand and on the whole do understand that they must compete with the pressing needs of schools, technical colleges, hospitals, social security and a host of other legitimate demands on the public purse. But the funds, once allocated, must be theirs to manage. Interference often comes in this area from those who should know better. Our present Prime Minister, for example, has been heard to say that education has become "too academic" and that educational institutions should plan courses with greater attention to the everyday needs of society. Now it is precisely in this area that universities must, in future, resist attempts to influence them with the utmost ferocity. Once a university yields to political pressure to introduce "useful" courses it is but a short step to the exercise of another and more deadly pressure. I am not suggesting that our present Prime Minister, whom I have used purely as an example because of a recent utterance of his, would ever contemplate exercising the type of pressure that I am about to describe. Man cannot foresee the future, as we have already agreed, and to bow to pressure over curricula is to admit the possible eventuality of bowing to pressure to teach all sorts of subjects in such a way that they are of political benefit to those who would wish to wield totalitarian power. "What you teach," if it is the object of pressure, soon becomes "How you teach it" too. It is in this area that I see the universities under greatest threat.

I have mentioned that these dangers are at their greatest in times of economic recession. But economic recession produces other effects. In such times, students soon lose faith in the belief that "useful" subjects are the gateway to good jobs and

personal prosperity. The result of this is that "useless" subjects become more popular. This division of subjects into useful and useless is not, I need hardly say, of academic origin: it is rather a categorisation implanted on academic areas of study by those who seek to use the particular talents of those who graduate from universities. Within the academy, we are committed to the intrinsic value of all our subjects — or, at least, we should be. Academics, who can be as prejudiced as most people, would prefer in their worst moments two categories: valuable subjects and valueless subjects. But no two academics would agree on a list of subjects in either category.

Nevertheless, three of the subjects taught in my Department are Latin, Classical Greek and Ancient History. In all of these subjects, in a year in which enrolments within the University of New England have risen (so I believe) by seven, enrolments have risen quite dramatically. The demand for Ancient History has been rising steadily for some years and this year the demand for Greek and Latin has been remarkable. The university now has nearly a hundred students studying Greek and Latin and there can only be one reason for this. It can only be that students feel an interest in the learning of languages, in which nearly all the seminal works of European civilisation are written. Students seem to be becoming in that unforgettable phrase "too academic". Political interference in universities would put an end to all this activity.

Leadership or Service?

I come now to the second area in which universities must exercise care in the preservation of their independence: and I think it is the more important of the two. If you attend a typical Graduation Ceremony, you may be sure that some personage of distinction will make a speech during the proceedings. Once you have heard one such speech, you have heard 95% of them. There are honourable exceptions, but the betting is pretty heavily in favour of our distinguished luminary saying at one point in his speech "You are the leaders of tomorrow". So common is the utterance of this sentiment that its truth is never challenged. Yet leaders are few and far between and a large proportion of them are bad. Picture a graduation group consisting of Themistocles, Alexander the Great, Augustus, Attila the Hun, Charlemagne, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler! Perhaps I should add the frightening Boadicea to the list as well and we would all want to add a few more personalities from more recent times.

This general area of discussion is really concerned with the so-called elitist theory of universities, which, if I understand it correctly, sees the universities as providing society with its natural leaders. I have to admit I find this view thoroughly offensive and it seems to me that a nation that requires its universities to produce leaders is already heading for disaster,

because the underlying assumption of such a view is that all that is needed for the establishment of a happy and contented society is the provision of leaders: a theory that comes straight from the house of bondage.

It is not leadership that we need, it is service. One of the few characters in the crowded tapestry of history who could have claimed to possess qualities of genuine leadership came among us as one who served and ended up dying a criminal's death on a garbage tip outside the walls of Jerusalem. Service is not stressed much in the elitist theories of universities. Yet service is the true basis of leadership and true leadership is open to all who have a genuine conception of the meaning of service and a burning desire to follow wherever the call of service may lead. Leadership is the outcome of competition, and service calls for co-operation. It seems to me that the universities of the future are faced with a stark choice. Since it is a fundamental tenet of all academic institutions that education, the process of learning, which is never completed and which is always suggesting new paths, new ideas to be investigated, is the one sure gateway to a wider understanding of the world about us — of life on earth, if you like — then it is incumbent upon us all to ponder the realities of the choice between competition and co-operation, the choice between leadership and service.

There is a genuine dilemma here, starkly brought before us in the confrontation between the two political elements in a democratic society. If we cut out the two extreme ends of the political spectrum, it must be conceded that the purpose of our own two-party system is the achievement of a compromise between competition and co-operation. The conservative element in our political system favours competition, the progressive element co-operation. (And let me hasten to add that supporters of the Liberal Coalition are not always conservative, nor are supporters of the Labor Party always progressive.) But there is this tension in our political set-up and we each have to place ourselves in what we see to be a position on the spectrum that indicates our view.

What I have termed the conservative side of politics is overt in its support of leadership and most of the leaders of the world have emerged from that side of politics. The progressive side of politics on the other hand is quite incapable of leadership in any shape or form. Tall poppies are ruthlessly cut down. This is not because Labor supporters are more quarrelsome. It is in essence because their performance is judged against the set of criteria by which we judge the conservative (and longer established) group. A political party is judged by its leader. His success is the party's success. It must never be like this in universities.

Education should lead to responsibility and the more of our young people who are able to enter universities the better. For it should be in universities that the in-

terdependence of all the strands of modern society on each other should be primarily realised. This is simply asking for a return to what Cicero called *humanitas*, by which he meant a proper appreciation of the intrinsic worth and dignity of each individual human being. This can only be appreciated if those who enter universities are encouraged to see themselves as learning to serve their fellows rather than to lead them.

I have said that the more who enter our universities, the better. I do not mean by this that I am advocating a lowering of standards, rather the reverse. For I see the university of the future, all too soon to be the present, as opening its doors to all who want to come. Many will find after a year of university study that their talents will find a fulfilment elsewhere, in commerce,

perhaps, or in the various trades. A professor is generally accorded greater respect than a carpenter?

Universities must allow themselves to recapture something of the essential humanity that was theirs in the days of their medieval foundation and which they have briefly rediscovered in times of great excitement such as in the immediate post war generation of students. The open door plays an essential part in the re-establishment of this spirit of humanity. Let all come and see if this is for them. In this way none who can learn to serve their fellow human beings best by availing themselves of the spirit of the academy will be lost and most who are moved to visit the halls of learning, for however brief a period, will be more tolerant and understanding of the ideal of service to humanity to which universities should unfailingly aspire.